

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 00115 01 OF 02 082038Z

73

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAJ-01

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 CU-02 DHA-02 IO-11

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4153

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 0115

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP

SUBJ: SPANISH LEADERS DESCRIBE THEIR INTENTIONS AND BACK THEM
UP WITH ACTS

REF: MADRID 9034

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PAGE 02 MADRID 00115 01 OF 02 082038Z

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER ARIAS' "NEWSWEEK" INTERVIEW WAS PRECEDED BY INTERVIEWS WITH OTHER SPANISH GOVT LEADERS IN FOREIGN PRESS AND LOCALLY OVER THE YEAR-END HOLIDAYS. THEIR VIEWS REVEAL HIGH DEGREE COMMON COMMITMENT TO PRUDENT PACE OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE ALTHOUGH THERE ARE EVIDENCES OF DIFFERENCES OF APPROACH THAT COULD BECOME DIFFICULT AND DECISIVE ISSUES LATER. PRESIDENT ARIAS IS DUE TO MAKE A MORE DETAILED PROGRAMMATIC SPEECH BEFORE THE CORTES BY THE END OF THE MONTH. MEANWHILE, PRESS IS ENJOYING UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE OF FREEDOM, POLICE HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM UNIVERSITIES AND ARE EXERCISING RESTRAINT IN CONTROLLING DEMONSTRATIONS, GOVT HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT GESTURES TO VARIOUS SOCIALIST GROUPS, AND OVER 6,000 PRISONERS, INCLUDING OVER 500 POLITICAL PRISONERS, HAVE BEEN FREED. END SUMMARY

1. PREMIER ARIAS NAVARRO'S "NEWSWEEK" INTERVIEW HAS RECEIVED FRONT-PAGE TREATMENT IN SPANISH MEDIA AND FOLLOWED YEAR-END STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR FRAGA, FONMIN AREILZA, JUSTICE MINISTER GARRIGUES, COMMITTING GOVT TO DEMOCRATIC COURSE WITH A DEFINITE TIMETABLE AND GOALS.

2. MAIN THEMES IN STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING:

A. DEMOCRATIZATION: GOVT WILL ADOPT MEASURES TO ENLARGE PARTICIPATION OF SPANIARDS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ACCELERATE NECESSARY CHANGES, E.G., ELECTIONS TO LOCAL GOVT (REFTEL).

B. NATIONWIDE ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD WITHIN COMING TWO YEARS ON BASIS OF UNIVERSAL SUFRAGE; IN AREILZA'S VIEW, PERHAPS WITHIN 12-14 MONTHS.

C. POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS TO BE STRENGTHENED: ARIAS SAID FOUR OR FIVE "POLITICAL PARTIES" WOULD BE ACTIVE IN 1977 THEREBY BREAKING A TABOO ON TERMINOLOGY AND COURAGEOUSLY SHOWING HIS COLORS TO THE "BUNKER".

D. COMMUNISM IS EXCLUDED: ARIAS, FRAGA, GARRIGUES, AND AREILZA HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR OPPOSITION TO PCE PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS, THOUGH IN AN EARLIER STATEMENT AREILZA LEFT THE DOOR AJAR FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MADRID 00115 01 OF 02 082038Z

PARTICIPATION.

E. SYNDICAL ORGANIZATIONS (LABOR) TO BE TRANSFORMED: ALTHOUGH GOVT SEEMS TO BE COMMITTED TO REVAMPING OF SYNDICAL SYSTEM, FRAGA HAS WARNED THAT PRESENT CLANDESTINE WORKERS COMMISSIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE DEPOLITICIZED IN ORDER TO BECOME PART OF A GENUINE PROFESSIONALLY-ORIENTED SYNDICAL SYSTEM.

F. COMMITMENT TO EUROPE ON SPANISH TERMS. SPAIN INTENDS TO DEMOCRATIZE ITS INTERNAL INSTITUTIONS AS IT SEES FIT BUT NOT NECESSARILY TO CONFORM TO OUTSIDE PRESCRIPTIONS. INDEED, LABOR MINISTER SOLIS SAID THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SOME "CONCESSIONS" (UNSPECIFIED) TOWARDS SPAIN.

G. SEPARATISM AND TERRORISM HAVE NO PLACE IN SPAIN: GOVT DOES NOT INTEND TO LET UNREPRESENTATIVE AND MARGINAL GROUPS INTIMIDATE IT AND DIVERT ITS ATTENTION FROM MAJOR TASK OF TRANSFORMING POLITICAL STRUCTURES. FRAGA POINTEDLY MENTIONED THAT MEETINGS SUCH AS THE ONE HELD IN GUERNICA (BASQUE PROVINCES) IN LATE DECEMBER AMONG PREDOMINANTLY COMMUNIST-ORIENTED SEPARATIST BASQUE GROUPS WOULD NOT BE TOLERATED.

H. FREE MARKET ECONOMY: FINANCE MINISTER VILLAR MIR, SUPPORTED BY OTHERS, HAVE PUBLICLY COMMITTED NEW GOVT TO FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM WITH ACCENT ON SOCIAL WELFARE. VILLAR MIR HAS, HOWEVER, STRESSED WAGE RESTRAINT. ONLY LABOR MINISTER SOLIS, LEANING ON THE POPULIST STRAIN IN FALANGISM, HAS COME UP WITH MORE RADICAL IDEAS SUCH AS PROPOSAL FOR THE NATIONALIZATION OF KEY BANKS, SOURCES OF ENERGY, AND ALL HEALTH FACILITIES.

I. CHANGES IN JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND LAWS ON BASIS RIGHTS: GOVT HAS INDICATED THAT LAWS THEMSELVES MUST FIRST BE CHANGED IN ORDER TO REMOVE GROUNDS FOR ARREST OF CITIZENS FOR ILLEGAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHER ALLEGED CRIMES. GOVT, THEREFORE, IS PREPARING TO CHANGE LAWS WITH RESPECT TO RIGHT OF ASSEMBLY, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND PETITION, AND APPARENTLY IS CONTEMPLATING WIDER "INDULTO" OR AMNESTY AFTER LAWS ARE CHANGED.

J. PROBABLY SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE: FRAGA AND AREILZA HAVE PUBLICLY ADVOCATED COMPLETE SEPARATION OF CHURCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 MADRID 00115 01 OF 02 082038Z

AND STATE; GARRIGUES, PRIVATELY CLOSE TO THE CHURCH, HAS SAID THAT THE FRAMEWORK OF FUTURE CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS IS AN OPEN QUESTION.

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PAGE 01 MADRID 00115 02 OF 02 082045Z

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 MADRID 0115

3. IN GENERAL, THE FOREGOING POINTS HAVE BEEN MADE WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF COINCIDENCE ALTHOUGH, AS INDICATED, THERE WAS SOME DISCREPANCY IN THE PRESENTATION BY SOME MINISTERS. DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH COULD BE REVEALED TO BE GREATER AS TIME PASSES. APART FROM ARIAS, THE KEY POLITICAL SPOKESMEN IN THE NEW GOVT ARE FRAGA, AREILZA, AND GARRIGUES. UP TO THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 MADRID 00115 02 OF 02 082045Z

POINT, THE THRUST OF THEIR VIEWS ABOUT POLITICAL CHANGE INDICATES A TENTATIVE TIMETABLE OF HOLDING GENERAL ELECTIONS BASED LARGELY ON UNIERAL SUFFRAGE (THOUGH CORPORATE FLAVOR OF REPRESENTATIVE BODIES MAY BE RETAINED) AT SOME POINT IN 1977 PRECEDED BY QUADRENNIAL LOCAL ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER 1976. ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, CANNOT BE REASONABLY HELD UNTIL NON-

COMMUNIST POLITICAL FORCES ARE ABLE TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES AND OPERATE FREELY SO THAT THE PEOPLE HAVE REAL CHOICES TO FORM. THE NEXT MONTHS PRESUMABLY WILL BE USED TO GET THIS PROCESS MOVING.

4. ALTHOUGH GOVT STATEMENTS GOT THE HEADLINES, GOVT ACTIONS ALSO RECEIVED PROMINENT ATTENTION. SINCE TAKING OFFICE DECEMBER 13, THE GOVT HAS ADOPTED A LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS VARIOUS SOCIALIST GROUPS (MADRID 8948) AND EVEN ALLOWED PSOE LEADER FELIPE GONZALEZ TO HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE AT MADRID AIRPORT. THE PRESS IS ENJOYING THE GREATEST DEGREE OF FREEDOM THAT IT HAS HAD IN MANY DECADES. THE POLTVBMOHURSOAKE# BE ACTING

UNDER NEW INSTRUCTIONS TO AVOID, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, CONFRONTATIONS WITH DEMONSTRATORS AND, AS A CONSEQUENCE, SIZEABLE PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS FOR A POLITICAL AMNESTY HAVE BEEN HELD IN MADRID, BARFABN,# SAN SEBASTIAN AND BILBAO IN THE PAST

SEVERAL WEEKS. MOREOVER, THE GOVT HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO USE POLICE POWER TO SETTLE LABOR DISPUTES, AND HAS WITHDRAWN THE POLICE FROM THE UNIVERSITIES. LASTLY, THE GOVT REVEALED AT THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR THAT OVER 6,300 PRISONERS OF ALL TYPES, INCLUDING OVER 500 POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD BENEFITTED FROM THE NOVEMBER 25, 1975 ROYAL PARDON (MADRID 8992).

5. FRAGA IRIBARNE HAS BEEN UNQUESTIONABLY THE MOST TALKED ABOUT AND WRITTEN ABOUT POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. HE HAS BEEN INTERVIEWED BY MANY SPANISH NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS AND MANY FOREIGN ONES AS WELL. HIS LATEST BOOK ENTITLED "A NATIONAL OBJECTIVE" WAS ISSUED IN EARLY DECEMBER AND IS ALREADY IN ITS SECOND EDITION. MANY OBSERVERS CONCLUDE THAT FRAGA IS THE STRONGMAN AND THE IDEA MAN OF THE PRESENT GOVT. OTHERS BELIEVE THAT ARIAS NAVARRO REMAINS THE ULTIMATE MEDIATOR AND THAT FRAGA HAS NOT AND WILL NOT ALWAYS HAVE HIS WAY. ARIAS HAS SET A NEW TIMETABLE FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MADRID 00115 02 OF 02 082045Z

BUT THIS TIME HE DOES NOT HAVE TO LOOK OVER HIS SHOULDER AND DOES NOT HAVE TO KOWTOW TO THE "BUNKER" TO THE DEGREE HE DID IN THE PAST. INDEED, HE CAN TRUST IN HIS OWN CABINET TO CARRY MUCH OF THE BURDEN OF THE GOVT PROGRAM. THAT PROGRAM NOW AWAITS MORE SPECIFIC SPELLING OUT. BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY, ARIAS IS EXPECTED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE "CORTES" WITH A MORE DETAILED STATEMENT OF THIS PROGRAM. EATON

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MADRID00115
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760008-0041
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760176/aaaacpov.tel
Line Count: 273
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MADRID 9034
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 MAR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <15 APR 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPANISH LEADERS DESCRIBE THEIR INTENTIONS AND BACK THEM UP WITH ACTS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP, (ARIAS NAVARRO, CARLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006